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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8813
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHDIR/RPO DUBAI 0081
RUEPMNF/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002555

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2028
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [TU](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ: MOI INTEL DEPUTY SAYS COOPERATION BETWEEN
SYRIA AND IRAN IS A BIG PROBLEM FOR IRAQ

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Classified By: POL-MIL Minister Counselor Marcie B. Ries
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: At an August 12 meeting with POL-MIL Minister-Counselor and S/CT Regional Coordinator, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior's Deputy Chief of Intelligence said he considered cooperation between Syria and Iran to be a serious problem, including the likely return to Iraq of Special Groups from Iran via Syria. He has spoken directly and harshly with Iranian officials on several occasions, letting them know the GOI was aware of Iranian weapons still entering Iraq. Regarding Syria, he believed that through the use of political and/or economic pressure, the SARG could be weaned from the influence of Iran. He dismissed the Border Security Working Group as thus far just "about talk," but expressed a desire to work on a list of specific measures which could be agreed. On the topic of drugs, Kamal said Iraq is not a major drug destination but the problem of transshipment was serious and the GOI needed to take better steps to counter narcotics trafficking. End summary.

12. (C) During a wide-ranging discussion with POL-MIL Minister Counselor and S/CT Regional Coordinator Carol Reynolds on August 12, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior Deputy Chief of Intelligence General Hussein Ali Kamal said that Syria was a source of many of Iraq's security problems. The Syrians were actively working to undermine the government of Iraq, whereas the Iranians were trying to exert political and economic influence. Acknowledging that Iran played a more lethal role, he said that they do so because of the presence of Coalition Forces (CF). Kamal told MINCOUNS that after the last border conference in Damascus, he spoke directly and harshly with the Iranians. "I told (the Iranian Ambassador) we have documents and we can set up an independent commission to look at the weapons we have found and we can let it decide where they are coming from," Kamal said. Kamal said that Iranian Ambassador Ghomei Flatly denied that weapons were coming from Iran.

13. (C) When asked about the Neighbors Conference Border Security Working Group, in which he participates as a member of the Iraqi delegation, Kamal said "It is a waste of time to have meetings with no specific agenda and no common goals." He thought the group could be useful if specific measures could be agreed.

14. (C) What was needed most was to disrupt cooperation between Syria and Iran. For example, Iran was planning to move Special Groups back into Iraq via Syria. Iraq had the means to exert political and economic pressure on both the Iranians and the Syrians. Kamal described Iranians as having 'tentacles' with their three largest being Hezbollah, Hamas

and Syria. If Iraq were to send some of its oil through Syria, as well as exerting political and pressure and offering other economic incentives, Syria could be weaned off of its relationship with Iran.

15. (C) In a discussion about foreign fighters still crossing into Iraq, Kamal told MINCOUNS that Iraq will never be able to defend the Syrian/Iraqi border completely. He added that Syria was unhelpful and still provided a safe haven for Baathists who move about freely in Syria without restrictions. Kamal said the Baathists, including those residing in Syria present a continued danger to Iraq. He described them as being comprised of both Shi'a and Sunnis. The Syrians had been successful at penetrating the GOI, including its intelligence services. He noted, in particular, elements sympathetic to Syria in MoD and to a lesser extent, in the MoI. MOI Minister Bulani was a good person who was not sectarian however. Kamal said there had been some cooperation between Iraq and Syria, describing limited intelligence sharing and a prisoner exchange, but nothing that amounted to a significant or useful ongoing dialogue.

16. (C) Kamal told MINCOUNS that the Iranians have been trying to "place conditions" on GOI officials, pressing them to agree that CF must leave Iraq. Kamal said he regularly told Iranians and Iraqis alike that Iraqis must live now for Iraq and must build up Iraq. He reminds Iraqis that to do so does not mean they forget the favors Iran did for them during the Saddam years, but now they must focus on their own country. Iran is able to exercise influence, he said, because their clerics prey upon uneducated and illiterate people - e.g., offering them a free ticket to go to a shrine or free medical care in an Iranian-supported clinic.

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17. (C) When asked about the levels of drugs crossing the border from Iran into Iraq, Kamal said Iraq is not a major drug destination, but added the GOI needed to do a better job of stopping transit. Under Saddam, suspected drug dealers were executed. Now drug dealers transit through Iraq, especially in Northern Iraq, adjacent to the Kurdish area of Iran. He identified corrupt border officers as one aspect of the problem. He also cited an Iranian Ministry of Interior official's claim that 10 percent of Iran's drugs come through Iraq. Kamal stated that as security improves in Iraq, his top priorities are money laundering and counter-narcotics.

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